

Final Notes July 23, 1998

IMPLEMENTATION TEAM MEETING NOTES

July 9, 1998, 9:00 a.m.-noon.

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE OFFICES PORTLAND, OREGON

I. Greetings and Introductions.

The July 9 meeting of the Implementation Team, held at the National Marine Fisheries Service's offices in Portland, Oregon, was chaired by John Palensky of NMFS and facilitated by Donna Silverberg. The agenda for the July 9 meeting and a list of attendees are attached as Enclosures A and B.

The following is a distillation (not a verbatim transcript) of items discussed at the meeting, together with actions taken on those items. Please note that some enclosures referenced in the body of the text may be too lengthy to attach; all enclosures referenced are available upon request from NMFS's Kathy Ceballos at 503/230-5420 or via email at kathy.ceballos@noaa.gov.

I. Introductions and Review of Agenda.

Palensky welcomed everyone to the meeting, led a round of introductions and a review of the agenda.

II. Updates.

A. In-Season Management. TMT chairwoman Cindy Henriksen reported that, for the 1998 spring period, the Biological Opinion flow target at Lower Granite Dam was 90 Kcfs; actual flow at that project averaged 113 Kcfs. At McNary, the BiOp spring target was 228 Kcfs; actual flow provided averaged 289 Kcfs. The spring season ended June 20, and the summer flow period has begun. Entering the summer period, Dworshak and Brownlee are essentially full; Henriksen said that, based on the most recent spreadsheet, it appears possible to achieve an average flow of up to 54 Kcfs at Lower Granite and 173 Kcfs at McNary, from now through August 31. Henriksen said Reclamation was able to surcharge the Hungry Horse project one foot this year; Hungry Horse is being operated between elevation 3560 and 3561 feet. Libby continues to fill; as you'll recall, she said, the 1998 sturgeon incubation flow period, in which flows of 25 Kcfs were provided at Bonners Ferry, was extended through June 25. Libby is now releasing 15 Kcfs and is continuing to fill; the project is now in the top three feet of its operating range. Henriksen reported that Grand Coulee filled the week of June 19, and has been operating in the top two feet of its operating range since then.

The 54 Kcfs you project as the potential summer average at Lower Granite is based on the SSARR, rather than the Water Supply Forecast? asked Jim Nielsen of WDFW. Yes, Henriksen

replied, although there is some consideration in the summer SSARR runs to match what we expect for a water supply. The reason I ask is that, based on the relative volumes in the current SSARR and Water Supply Forecast, 54 Kcfs is probably at the upper end of the forecast range, and may be optimistic, Nielsen said. Maybe – it's just a forecast at this point, Henriksen said.

B. Plan for Analyzing and Testing Hypotheses (PATH). No PATH Update was presented at today's meeting.

C. Integrated Scientific Advisory Board (ISAB). No ISAB update was presented at today's meeting.

D. Dissolved Gas Team (DGT). No DGT update was presented at today's meeting.

E. System Configuration Team (SCT). Bill Hevlin of NMFS, SCT co-chair, updated the IT on recent SCT activities. First, he said, I wanted to give you a heads-up about a potential policy issue regarding gas abatement at Grand Coulee. As most of you are aware, the Bureau of Reclamation is in the process of scoping Grand Coulee gas abatement alternatives; they have now developed a short list of five alternatives that they would like to carry forward to the conceptual study phase.

One alternative the Bureau rejected was a downstream weir labyrinth, which had the potential to treat all the water passing Grand Coulee -- both spill and powerhouse water -- and reduce dissolved gas below the project to 110%, Hevlin said. Several SCT members wanted to see that alternative carried through to the next analytical phase; however, the Bureau rejected it, based on cost and on the Bureau's position that it is their responsibility to ensure that the water passing Grand Coulee does not add to TDG problems downstream – it is not their responsibility to physically “clean up” the water once it has passed through Grand Coulee.

EPA and the Bureau have scheduled a meeting to discuss and, hopefully, resolve this policy-level question, on July 23, Hevlin continued. Mary Lou Soscia spent a few minutes discussing this upcoming meeting, which will also involve representatives from the Colville Tribes and WDOE. Ultimately, she said it is EPA's position that this alternative should stay on the table until the underlying policy question is resolved; the decision to remove it from further consideration needs to be made at the policy level, rather than by a technical work group. In the meantime, said Hevlin, as I say, this is just a heads-up for the IT, that this issue exists and EPA and the Bureau have scheduled a meeting to discuss it.

Moving on, SCT co-chair Jim Ruff said the basinwide gas abatement steering committee will be meeting via conference call on July 13; he said that, following that call, he will report back to both SCT and IT regarding the group's progress toward developing a short- and long- term systemwide gas management work plan. Ruff added that anyone who wants to participate in future meetings of this group should contact him at 503/222-5161, and he will add their name to the notification list.

Finally, said Hevlin, the SCT has begun work on ranking all of the projects in the FY'99 Columbia River Fish Mitigation program; it is a surety that we will not receive the full amount requested from Congress for FY'99, and that we will not be able to afford all of the projects now in the FY'99 plan, he said. Further prioritization discussions will take place at the next SCT

meeting, scheduled for Friday, August 14.

In response to another question, Ruff observed that the Congressionally-mandated Corps capital review process will be entering its second phase, beginning next week, with a technical/scientific briefing to the ISAB on surface bypass, particularly results from the 1998 prototype testing, and on the Corps' TDG management program. The ISAB's Phase I report was submitted to the Council in June, he said; the Council took public comment on that report, and the report has now been submitted to Congress. It is hoped that the ISAB's Phase II report will be presented at the Power Planning Council's September meeting, Ruff added. Phase III of the review, covering adult fish passage improvements and an integration of all the projects in the CRFM program, is scheduled for completion in January 1999.

F. Decision Process Coordinating Group (DPCG). No DPCG update was presented at today's meeting.

III. 1998 Water Management Plan.

Henriksen distributed copies of the most recent draft of the 1998 Water Management Plan, dated July 6 (Enclosure C). This document incorporates many of the measures called for and information included in the 1998 supplemental Biological Opinion, she explained; you'll notice that this draft of the plan includes a number of highlighted areas, which represent language on which there is not 100% agreement within the TMT, but which represent potential operations or issues. Most pertain to the Idaho proposals regarding the relative priority of Dworshak refill vs. providing flows for spring migrants, Henriksen said. These sections can be found on pages 7, 8, 13 and 14 of the July 6 draft. Again, these highlighted section have not been agreed to by the full TMT, but have been included in the draft plan at Idaho's request, she explained.

Two items that still need to be resolved include the highlighted statement on page 14, to the effect that Brownlee will operate to guarantee refill to elevation 2059 feet by September 30; there was a request to add the phrase "...or another time that is acceptable to Idaho Power and the salmon managers," Henriksen continued. That concept still needs to be discussed, she said: Idaho Power will be talking about it later this month, and will report back to the TMT once the company response has been formulated.

The other issue that still needs to be resolved is found on page 12, in the section labeled "Summer Reservoir Interim Draft Limits," Henriksen said. I received some proposed language for this paragraph from NMFS yesterday, she said; it was agreed to give the NMFS and COE attorneys an opportunity to discuss NMFS' proposed language prior to incorporating it into the Water Management Plan. Henriksen distributed copies of NMFS' proposed language for this section (Enclosure D). The basic issue is one of Biological Opinion interpretation, she added; rather than trying to hash that out among the TMT, it was agreed to let the attorneys weigh in.

Henriksen continued on through Enclosure C, drawing the IT's attention to some of the changes that have been made in the 1998 WMP. Ultimately, Palensky asked what the process will be for finalizing the 1998 Water Management Plan. I wanted to bring it to the IT today to see if you have any further comments at this time, Henriksen replied; if we can reach agreement on the interim draft limit issue, once we receive the response from Idaho Power regarding Brownlee refill, I think that, from the TMT's perspective, the document will be complete. I

would expect this to be an approval item on the August IT agenda, she said. In response to a question, Roger Fuhrman of Idaho Power said the company will be discussing the Brownlee refill issue at an internal meeting next week; it should be possible to resolve it at that time.

IV. Dworshak Summer Flow Operation Issue.

Henriksen explained that yesterday's IT meeting included a discussion of SOR 98-26 (attached as Enclosure E), one of the provisions of which was a recommendation that Dworshak release 10 Kcfs through July 12. Then, from July 13 through August 31, the SOR recommends that Dworshak outflow be increased to 14 Kcfs, at a temperature of 50 degrees F. At yesterday's TMT meeting, CRITFC presented a reiteration of its SOR 98-C4, which included a recommendation that the releases from Dworshak begin later, with a somewhat different temperature regime. At the same time, Idaho has requested that Dworshak not be drafted below elevation 1580 feet before July 31, to maintain a recreational pool at that project. Both the Idaho and CRITFC proposals include a request that, on August 31, about 200 KAF of Dworshak storage be retained for release in September and/or November.

The TMT was unable to reach a consensus about how to operate Dworshak next week, Henriksen said; as a result, it was agreed to raise the following issue to IT:

QUESTIONS:

1. Should the 85 mm size of Clearwater fish be the trigger and controlling factor for release of water from Dworshak?
2. How should the water in Dworshak be prioritized? Should priority be given to:
 1. Providing flow and temperature control in the Snake River during the juvenile migration with consideration for Clearwater fish; OR
 2. Maintaining a recreational pool (draft no lower than 1580 feet by July 31) and retain approximately 200 KAF of water in Dworshak for release in September (for late-migrating juvenile and adult considerations) and/or in November (steelhead sport fishing)?

BACKGROUND::

SOR 98-26 (copy attached) requests the following:

"Operate Dworshak at 10 Kcfs through July 12. Regulate outflow to the present temperature of about 53 degrees F. Operate Dworshak at 14 Kcfs July 13 through August 31, to reach elevation 1520 feet by August 31. Beginning on July 13, decrease temperature from Dworshak to 50 degrees F at a rate of no more than 1 degree F per day, until notified otherwise."

Idaho Fish and Game proposes to check Clearwater subyearling fish status tomorrow, ramp Dworshak release up no higher than 10 Kcfs by Friday night with temperature

reduced from 53 degrees F to 48 degrees F, while temperature at Lower Granite is being assessed. Watch water temperature at Lower Granite. If Lower Granite water temperature is acceptable, continue to hold Dworshak release at 10 Kcfs. Re-evaluate status weekly. In the long run, Idaho is also concerned about adverse recreational impacts that would result from drafting Dworshak below 1580 feet by July 31, and below elevation 1535 feet by August 31 (in order to reserve water for flow augmentation in September for hatchery steelhead fisheries).

The Corps is concerned about implementing SOR 98-26 because the operations requested in the SOR conflict with those required by Idaho and CRITFC.

The Nez Perce Tribe believes that fish size is critical consideration to decision-making on Dworshak operation. They are agreeable to augmenting Dworshak up to 10 Kcfs in three increments through Sunday, and reducing release temperature from the current 54 degrees F to 50 degrees F.

(A copy of this issue statement is attached as Enclosure F).

The IT spent a few minutes discussing this issue, and the separate questions it contains. In response to a question, Henriksen said the current water temperature measurements at Lower Granite, as of 7 a.m. this morning, are 66 degrees F in the scroll case and 68.5 degrees F at the forebay monitoring station, taken 15 feet below the reservoir's surface. In response to another question, it was observed that the differences between the CRITFC and Idaho proposals include the fact that Idaho has asked that Dworshak not be drafted below 1580 feet prior to July 31, as well as the timing of the use of the 200 KAF that is retained for use after August 31 – Idaho would like to retain some of that water for use in November, to enhance the steelhead sport fishery in the Clearwater, while CRITFC would release that water in September, to improve conditions for late-migrating juvenile and adult fall chinook. In addition, IDFG has recommended that Dworshak discharge be held at 10 Kcfs through the end of July, while SORs 98-26 and 98-C4 recommend that Dworshak discharge be ramped up to 14 Kcfs and 13 Kcfs, respectively, next week. In response to another question, Dave Statler said the Nez Perce Tribe supports the CRITFC proposal.

Michele DeHart of the Fish Passage Center added that the subyearling chinook passage index at Lower Granite jumped from 1,000 fish two days ago to over 6,000 yesterday and today. In other words, we're seeing a big jump in subyearling passage at Lower Granite, at a time when water temperatures are rising to levels at or near the state water quality standard -- that's information the TMT didn't have at yesterday's meeting, she said. DeHart distributed a memo, summarizing the updated 1991-1997 subyearling fall chinook migration data (Enclosure G). The two key things we see happening, from a passage standpoint, is that we're getting dangerously close to the 70-degree water temperature that proved to be disastrous for fall chinook last year, DeHart said. At the same time, the passage index is increasing dramatically – we know the fish are present, and that they represent all of the different stocks and sources in the Snake/Clearwater basin.

If the proposal NMFS supports (SOR 98-26) is not implemented, will that result in a jeopardy call on fall chinook? asked Doug Arndt of COE. Or would the CRITFC or Idaho proposals, if

implemented, simply be a less-beneficial way of managing the water for the fish, in NMFS' view? The latter, said Chris Ross of NMFS.

Ross distributed Enclosure H, a summary of the relationship between Lower Granite flow, temperature and turbidity and fall chinook survival at Lower Granite and in the Lower Granite-Lower Monumental reach, for the years 1995-1997. CRITFC's Tom Lorz distributed Enclosure I, a summary of 1994, 1995 and 1996 Snake River water temperature control actions and their results, showing the volumes and dates of water releases from Dworshak and their effects on temperature at the Lower Granite, Little Goose, Lower Monumental and Ice Harbor projects.

The group spent a few minutes discussing this information, and the likely impact of the 1998 Dworshak releases on temperatures and fall chinook survival downstream. Eventually, Ron Boyce summarized this discussion by saying that everyone is in agreement on the need to reduce Snake River temperatures and maintain flows for the benefit of migrating fall chinook. The crux of this disagreement, he said, is whether we should constrain releases from Dworshak in order to maintain the recreational pool at the project through the end of July, and retain 200 KAF for use after August 31, or whether we should use Dworshak for flow and temperature control now, during the summer period.

Dan Daley made the suggestion that, while BPA does not support or oppose any of the three proposals on the table, if the volume of warmer water being released from Brownlee Reservoir was reduced now, while Snake River flows are still above the Biological Opinion target, it would be possible to release less water from Dworshak now, and still bring about an acceptable level of temperature control in the Snake River mainstem. That would also have the benefit of retaining additional water in Dworshak and Brownlee for use later in the summer period, when Snake River flows are at their lowest, Daley said -- in other words, it would give us greater flexibility later in the summer.

Various IT members opposed this suggestion, on the grounds that there is a strong relationship between flow, as well as temperature, and survival for fall chinook migrants; therefore, reducing Snake River flows now, when juvenile numbers are high, would not be in the best interests of these fish. Also, said Boyce, the salmon managers would like to get as much of the warmer Brownlee water out early in the season, rather than later in the season, when it will have warmed up even more. Fish numbers are peaking now, said Palensky; while Dan makes some valid points, and we may indeed wish we had more flexibility when we get to the end of the summer season, NMFS' priority is clearly the needs of juvenile migrants during the summer, and we cannot support leaving 200 KAF in Dworshak for use after August 31.

After some minutes of further discussion, Silverberg sketched the following proposed operation for Dworshak on the board: ramp Dworshak outflow up to 10 Kcfs as soon as possible, by Saturday or Sunday, July 11 or 12, while reducing outflow temperature by no more than 2-3 degrees F per day to 48-46 degrees F. Rather than waiting, as Idaho has suggested, to see what effect this higher release of lower-temperature water has on temperatures at Lower Granite before increasing Dworshak outflow further, increase Dworshak outflow to 14 Kcfs on Monday, July 13.

Lorz said that, based on the latest size data on the Clearwater fish, CRITFC is willing to support the above operation, with the exception that they would prefer that flows be ramped up to 13

Kcfs, rather than 14 Kcfs, on Monday. In response to a question from Silverberg, Jim Yost said Idaho would prefer to maintain Dworshak outflow of 10 Kcfs through next Wednesday, July 15. Palensky said that NMFS cannot support this proposal, but would be willing to consider limiting the Dworshak release to 13 Kcfs, rather than 14 Kcfs, beginning Monday. Fred Olney said the Fish and Wildlife Service supports the NMFS proposal; Nielsen said WDFW does as well, although he expressed a preference for 14 Kcfs from Dworshak, rather than 13 Kcfs, beginning Monday. Boyce said ODFW concurs with WDFW's proposed operation.

After some minutes of discussion, Yost said Idaho is willing to agree to ramping Dworshak outflow up to 10 Kcfs over the weekend and 13 Kcfs beginning Monday, despite the fact that this operation is expected to result in Dworshak drafting below elevation 1580 feet by July 26 or 27, rather than July 31. However, I will point out that this operation will limit our options in August, he said; the higher we ramp up flows now, the sooner we'll run out of water from Dworshak, and the worse the fish will take it on the chin at the end of the summer season.

After some minutes of discussion, the IT recommended that Dworshak outflow be increased to 10 Kcfs as soon as possible, by Saturday or Sunday, depending on scheduling constraints; at the same time, the temperature of the Dworshak discharge will be ramped down to 46 degrees F, by no more than 2-3 degrees per day. On Monday, Dworshak outflow will be increased to 13 Kcfs, with an outflow temperature of 46 degrees F.

Palensky added that this is a dynamic issue; the TMT will have some further discussion of temperature, flow and the status of the fish migration at its meeting next Wednesday, and will continue to revisit the Dworshak operation weekly during the remainder of the summer period.

V. Grand Coulee Refill.

Boyce said the salmon managers had requested that Grand Coulee be refilled to elevation 1290 feet by July 5, in order to ensure that the maximum amount of flow augmentation water was available for the summer period. The project is still two feet from full, he said, and I wanted to know why refill did not occur as scheduled.

Daley explained that inflows to the project dropped sharply last week; at the same time, BPA's schedulers were told by project personnel that, because of floating debris in the forebay of Grand Coulee, they could not fill the project past elevation 1289 feet. We will refill the project to 1290 this week, said Daley; essentially what happened is that we took some water from this week and put it into last week. The sooner Grand Coulee refills, the better, said Boyce, and I would hope that we can ensure better communication between the BPA and Reclamation schedulers in the future. We've already taken care of it, Daley said.

VI. Other.

Boyce requested an update on the discussions of the options for mitigating for the 1998 Grand Coulee drum gate repair work. To me, there is no issue with the spring drum gate repair work, replied Reclamation's Ron McKown – the salmon managers had the option to use that water for spring fish, and you chose not to do so. We are looking at providing some additional flows during the summer, he continued; one option we're considering is not pumping into Banks

Lake, so that we actually draw that reservoir down by five feet. We have also surcharged Hungry Horse by one foot, although there may be a hydraulic capacity issue involved in getting the full Hungry Horse draft out during the summer period, he said. Another option that is still on the table is drafting Grand Coulee below 1280 feet this summer; those discussions are still ongoing between the Bureau, the State of Washington and the Colville and Spokane Tribes.

Basically, Reclamation has already decided not to pump into Banks Lake, and to try to get all of the water out of Hungry Horse by August 31, McKown said. Regarding the deeper Grand Coulee draft, while this decision has not yet been made, my intuition is that we will draft the project below 1280 feet in 1998, but probably not three feet below that level, he added. I would reiterate my request that the group discussing these mitigation options be expanded beyond NMFS, USBR and the tribes, to include all of the salmon managers, said Boyce. I'll talk to Paul to be sure that the salmon managers are kept informed about these discussions, Palensky said.

VII. Approval of June 4 IT Meeting Minutes.

Mary Lou Soscia observed that there was a statement in the minutes of the June 4 meeting to the effect that the Clean Water Act, as presently written and litigated, does not apply to the projects in the Federal Columbia River Power System. I wanted to be very clear, she said - - the Clean Water Act applies to all discharges, whether it be a dam, a cow or anything else.

What the Clean Water Act did was set up a permit system applicable to point source discharges. This permit system does not apply to dams, Soscia said, but the Clean Water Act does apply to dams. EPA and the states are now grappling with how to deal with non-point sources -- agricultural sources and hydroelectric sources included. There is ongoing litigation pertaining to non-point sources not meeting the Act, Soscia said, so I want to be very clear that any dam does come under the authority of the Clean Water Act, as a non-point source. It was agreed to note this clarification for the minutes; Daley said he will discuss his statement (which sparked Soscia's response) with BPA legal staff and make changes if necessary. No further comments were offered on the minutes from the June 4 IT meeting at this time.

VII. Next IT Meeting Date and Agenda Items.

The next meeting of the Implementation Team was set for Thursday, August 6, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at NMFS' Portland headquarters. Meeting notes prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.